

The site provides the foil against which the hardships of immigration and the ramifications of political realities such as exclusion can be presented and discussed. The carved inscriptions provide the personal insight that humanizes these issues and relates them to the visitor. It is a great accomplishment to preserve the carved poems, but it is not enough if they are not available for public view and interpretation. Likewise, restora-

tion of the buildings and grounds combined with a good interpretative program will give visitors a greater sense of the physical presence of the station, the power of the governing authority behind it, and the feelings of those it affected.

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Stonewall—An Icon in Gay History— Recognized by the National Register

It was a spontaneous uprising by a rag-tag group fiercely resisting arrest for the simple act of gathering in a local tavern, the Stonewall Inn, a semi-underground, Mafia-run watering hole in New York's Greenwich Village neighborhood, that catered to a predominantly gay male clientele. None of the participants—not the policemen nor the patrons of the bar nor those who joined in when the fight moved out into the street—could have imagined that the rioting they precipitated would come to be an international symbol for the struggle for gay and lesbian civil rights. What started out as an ordinary bar raid by police but turned into a pitched battle in the streets that stretched over three nights now, 30 years later, has been recognized by the federal government as a site worthy of preservation. On May 27, 1999, Stonewall Inn was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. It is considered to be the first property listed in the National Register specifically for its association with gay history.

An outgrowth of the revolutionary spirit of the late 1960s, Stonewall is historically significant because it marked a sharp turn in the tactics of the gay rights movement—from an attitude of politely requesting respect and tolerance to one of vocally asserting that gays should have the same civil rights as the

“straight” population. It is this defiant stance that is celebrated in hundreds of gay rights parades and festivals around the world, many held in June to commemorate the Stonewall event. The listing is a testament not only to the increased acceptance of gays and lesbians in contemporary society but also to the still young but growing field of scholarship in gay history. Also, it is another example of how, in recent years, the National Register, and historic preservation in general, have become more inclusive of a broader spectrum of human experience than in the past.

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The Stonewall Inn was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on May 27, 1999. Photo courtesy the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation/Andrew Dollart.